



RACE REPORT – SILVERSTONE

Just one week after the opening R300 rounds, the weather at Silverstone couldn't have been more different for the family of Caterham Roadsport championships. Blue skies and not a hint of rain gave everyone something to smile about, as did the sometimes wincingly-close racing that the National circuit always provides.

Supersports

James MacLachlan produced a peerless display in his immaculate blue car to take an early lead in Caterham's newest championship.

In Saturday's race, the DPR Motorsport driver briefly lost the lead in the opening laps after a mistake at Brooklands dropped him to fourth, but was quickly back at the front whilst the drivers behind jostled for the remaining podium places. Paul Begley, Iain Forsythe and new-to-Caterhams Nick Fronzoni all took turns at harrying MacLachlan for the lead, with Begley and Fronzoni both very briefly getting a nose in front. But MacLachlan held his nerve and crossed the line just one tenth of a second ahead of Begley. The one-tenth separation would become a feature of all the Caterham racing over the weekend. Forsythe took the remaining trophy whilst an impressive drive from an uncharacteristic thirteenth on the grid gave Rod Arnold valuable points in fourth, after displacing Fronzoni on the final lap.

There was no such trouble from the also-rans on Sunday for MacLachlan. A superb first lap gave him a one-and-a-half second lead over the Begley/Forsythe/Arnold battle that started on lap one and didn't finish until they'd crossed the line thirty minutes later, helping MacLachlan disappear eleven seconds up the road. MacLachlan's fellow Academy 09 graduate Forsythe went one better than Saturday to take second, after trading places all



through the race with the Trackcars supported car of Begley, who spent much of it sporting one of Arnold's wings around his nose cone. Begley took third and Arnold another fourth, but the drive of the race belonged to Robert Smith, who finished sixth having started last, after retiring from the lead group of the first race with fuel problems.

Roadsport-A

JJ O'Malley leads the championship after Silverstone, thanks to a pair of wins that couldn't have been more closely fought.

Occasional Roadsport-A racer Ian Payne, now aiming for a full season, put his orange car on pole, but veteran O'Malley made the better start. Payne held firm in the first few corners, but by lap two, Trackcars driver O'Malley was ahead – just. The pair would be separated by just 0.01s on more than one occasion, but O'Malley retained the advantage. Behind them, Magd Mohaffel, Antony Sidney-Wollett and Jamie Orton pushed themselves into the lead pair's battle. Sidney-Woollett was first to take advantage and would often grab the second-place spot, before a single mid-race lap in first for the PIM driver. Meanwhile, Mohaffel's DPR Motorsport car, confusingly nearly identical to Payne's, made a measured attack on the podium, rising to second at just the right time, but it wasn't to be. O'Malley held onto first and Payne overcame Mohaffel for third with Sidney-Woollett fourth and Jamie Orton, who'd kept a watching brief on the lead four for the entire race, finishing fifth.

It was thought that the only way Payne could be closer to O'Malley was if he sat in the passenger seat for a race, but the pair did manage to reduce the gap even further on Sunday, with the same leading group joined by pre-race favourite Graham Johnson, who had been hampered by car trouble prior to race one, and ex-Caterham Grads racer Darrell Wilson. Behind O'Malley, positions were changing lap after lap until the mid-way point when contact between Mohaffel and Payne pulled out a valve on Mohaffel's front left tyre, sending him to the pits for a new wheel and putting him out of contention. O'Malley and Payne now stretched their legs on the third place battle being fought between Orton and Sidney-Woollett. Things became a little too close between the pair and Sidney-Woollett came off worst, dropping down to eighth, whilst Johnson was in a similar position with Mark Figes, Figes being spun even further down the field. O'Malley took the chequered flag 1/20th of a second ahead of Payne. Orton maintained his third place to the end, whilst Wilson avoided trouble to finish fourth in a good debut weekend.



Roadsport-B

Roadsport-B provided the closest series in 2009 and following the opening rounds, 2010 looks sets for another to-the-wire year, but this time with even more drivers.

No fewer than eight cars squabbled over the lead in Saturday's race, with Lee Wiggins, pole man Steve Day and Academy 09 Gp2 champion Ben Whibley, all taking their turns to lead the pack. Behind them, but only just, Martin Addison and Jeremy Webb were enjoying banging wheels, whilst Richard Dolby, Chris Lay and the other 09 Academy champion Jay Gardner couldn't find a way past. Wiggins passed Whibley for the lead with three laps to go and made it stick to the line; Whibley less than the customary tenth behind. Day picked up the third place trophy, with Webb in fourth and Addison fifth.

Whibley made the early running on Sunday and for a moment, looked liked he'd broken the tow, surging a massive three-quarters of a second ahead... But Webb had other ideas and reeled him in before passing for the lead. Wiggins came back from being shunted down the order in the first few laps to snatch the lead from Webb at the halfway point. Webb would have it back within a couple of laps and in the confusion of just who should be leading the race, Wiggins span (or was spun) well down the order, leaving Day to pick up the battle with Webb. Day and Webb set about exchanging the lead, just 0.001s separating them at one point. Meanwhile, the two Academy champions were now together, Gardner working his way up the order and Whibley his way down. Gardner put a strong move on Whibley to take third, punting him down to eighth. It was Webb who would lead at the crucial time to take the win from Day, with Gardner in third and Addison just behind. Wiggins, showing an amazing display of speed and determination, recovered to finish fifth. However, the stewards were already looking at the Gardner/Whibley clash and penalised Gardner, who acknowledged and accepted his part in the incident, with 10 seconds, dropping him to ninth.

Wiggins leads the table, with Webb and Day just behind, reminiscent of the Fowell/Sawyer/Brannan scrap last year. This time, however, Addison, Dolby and Lay clearly have the pace to stay with them and Gardner has been artificially pushed down the table. The race, literally, is on.

Next Rounds: Castle Combe, 3rd May.

